

Mrs. Hall's Love for Brother Willie

Psychologic Proof of Warm Heart

Her 'Coldness'
Only a Pose to
Reassure Him

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NOW that the great judicatory battle of New Brunswick has been brought to an overwhelmingly victorious conclusion for the defendants, four questions crystallize out of the maze of facts and fancies left on the field of this tremendous forensic Armageddon:

Our Great Questions

What psychological driving power is behind the whole case?

Why was the marriage of the Rev. Edward W. Hall and Frances Noel Stevens, to all appearances, an unhappy one?

Why was it that Willie Stevens, profoundly astonishing everybody, played the stellar role in this drama?

Why did Mrs. Hall appear "cold-blooded," as the special prosecutor characterized her?

There is just one answer to all these questions, and the answer is—

Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall always was, and probably is today more than ever, overattached to her brother Willie! She is, psychologically and platonically speaking, obsessed with that love.

An Electra Complex

Behind the drama of New Brunswick, with all its complications, looms the most interesting case of an Electra complex ever observed, since Dr. Sigmund Freud, of Vienna, father of psycho-analysis, coined this term.

Electra, of Greek mythology, greatly attached to her father, Agamemnon, transferred her admiration for the latter to her brother, Orestes, exerting the strongest possible influence over him. An Electra complex is a fixation, releasing certain emotions clustering about specific mental and nervous associations connected with a woman's father, or brother, or both.

How such a complex is brought about is very succinctly explained by Andre Tridon, one of Dr. Freud's ablest interpreters. This brilliant Frenchman writes: "Situations often arise in which a female child, over attached to her father, eventually transfers this fixation to the brother"—as may be possible in the case of Mrs. Hall and her brother Willie.

The Mothering Instinct

As explained before, this "love" of a sister for her brother implies the meaning of this word, as defined by Kraft-Ebing, in its most platonic sense, that is, "a spiritual comradeship, in which there is no element of sexual desire." This most glorious manifestation of that world-moving urge which



A tower of motherly strength during the trying hours of her ordeal, Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall (above), widow of the slain New Brunswick minister, comforted her eccentric brother, Willie Stevens, shown at upper right with bared head and at lower right in his fireman's hat, although her own heart was yearning for comfort. Her loving solicitude for him has been one of the outstanding features of the case since the murder was discovered four years ago.

we call love is the very love that makes our mothers jeopardize their lives for us "to endow us with the wondrous gift of life."

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that the Electra hypothesis of the Viennese savant holds true in the spectacular New Brunswick case, let us go into the details:

By mothering a brother too much, the woman usually stunts his spiritual development. While mentally far more gifted than the average, as Willie convincingly proved on the witness stand, he became absolutely dependent spiritually on his sister Frances, in spite of the fact that Frances is some years his junior.

Applying the Theory

By mothering a brother too much, maternal instincts in the sister are, as a rule, gratified to such an extent that the thought of marriage comes comparatively late or never. In applying this theory to the Hall case, Frances Stevens's overattachment to Willie, when she eventually thought of marriage, may have induced her to choose a younger man. More, even, a younger man with one of those boyish faces that always seem to remain young.

By mothering Willie too much, it is very probable that Frances Stevens spent so much of her

inborn maternal love that, even though she may have been gifted with a generous share, it may have been too depleted to fully satisfy a younger husband.

So much for the direct complications arising for Mrs. Hall out of a sisterly overattachment for her brother. Indirectly, she suffered just as much, because by mothering Willie too much she felt more severely than anybody else the sting of criticism her brother subjected himself to in being an "eccentric."

Putting on mental blinders, figuratively speaking, in order not to see that her brother Willie was made the butt of ridicule, due to his peculiarities, she developed a fear complex; that is, anything and everything in connection with Willie threw her automatically into a state of apprehension, simultaneously releasing a psychological defense mechanism, in form of what psychoanalysis terms "an overcompensated fear complex." By this is meant that a person suffering from a fear complex will not only try to overcome her, or his, apprehension, but will even go much further in "putting up a stiff front."

Why She Seems Cold

This, in turn, very often results in a manifestation which may easily be mistaken for an unnatural reticence and cold-

bloodedness; whereas, it only proves that this so-called "cold-blooded" person is in reality more tender-hearted and timorous than the average.

As a matter of fact, the stronger a fear complex is, the stronger the defense mechanism, in form of an "overcompensation," exerts itself.

Courage Born of Fear

In logical conclusion, the greater the fear the more bravely will the fearful person fight when cornered! A courage thus induced is naturally not the lasting courage of the born hero, but merely a product of hysterical fear, and extremely transitory.

It would seem that Mrs. Hall's overcompensated fear complex gave her the appearance of cold-bloodedness, which, in turn, may have discouraged Dr. Hall.

And, because he became discouraged, his wife's apparent coldness was intensified, with the result that she was thrown with renewed impetus upon the brotherly love of Willie.

Although, to all appearances, utterly unlike each other, Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall and her brothers, Henry and William

Behind Mask
She Is Gentle,
Tender, True

Stevens, are to the psychologist unmistakably fruits of the same family tree. Manifesting different traits of what seems to be the typical Stevens character, inherited from a long row of staid and conservative forebears, each one of the three Stevens descendants presents a different aspect of inherent family traits in pure strain.

Henry's He-Man Status

Classifying such inherited traits as to their physical, spiritual and mental manifestations, we observe Henry Stevens—the typical he-man—to be the physically true Stevens. Psychologically, he may be classed normal to such an extent as to be uninteresting as an object of psycho-analysis.

Mrs. Hall (nee Stevens) embodies the spiritual traits of her family in her imperturbable poise, a poise so immovable that Special Prosecutor Simpson, in his summation of the case, said of her: "Look into the eyes of this woman. She is so cold-blooded that when she is on the witness stand telling of the murder of her husband, she can stop her testimony to ask the court to have a photographer ejected so he can't take a picture of her!"

Here, the learned jurist made a remarkable and unquestionably correct observation but, with all due respect to his shrewdness in forensic matters, his interpretation is altogether wrong!

Simpson's Mistake

Senator Simpson discerned clearly enough that Mrs. Hall's poise while on the stand was something quite extraordinary, but he did not fathom that what he termed "cold-bloodedness" was really an acquired imperturbability springing from an overcompensated fear complex!

For the world at large, for the court, and most of the newspaper men "covering" the case, Willie Stevens turned out to be a sensation extraordinary. The complacency with which he took the witness stand, the grandiose equanimity of mind with which he testified and fenced with the prosecutor, made him the hero of the trial; he was dubbed a genius!

Now, while Willie Stevens, contrary to appearances, is mentally the most gifted member of the family—being the only one of the Stevenses whose inner life is very little contorted by a strait-jacket of repressions and inhibitions—he is not exactly a genius. He represents the very interesting type of a thoroughly unassuming but nevertheless decided self-willed intellectual.

Willie's Psychology

Being self-willed, he has either never been beset by bogies of any kind, or else he successfully conquered fear. Whatever the case may be, Willie would not be Willie if he were not "eccentric"—self-willed—as he was frequently characterized.

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